

THE MYSTERIES OF GOD'S PROVIDENCE.

TWO SERMONS

PREACHED ON THE

AFTERNOON AND EVENING OF SUNDAY,
NOV. 4, 1849,

IN THE

UNION EVANGELICAL CHURCH OF SALISBURY AND AMESBURY, MASS.

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NOTE.

It may be proper to remark in regard to these Sermons, that they lay no claim to originality or literary merit. They have been hastily prepared, amid the pressure of other duties, while the author was pursuing his studies as Resident Licentiate of Andover Theological Seminary. For a few of the illustrations introduced in the second Sermon he would acknowledge his indebtedness to facts contained in the published Discourse of B. B. Edwards, delivered in 1841, on the death of Harrison.

SERMON I.

ROMANS XI. 33.

HOW UNSEARCHABLE ARE HIS JUDGMENTS, AND HIS WAYS PAST
FINDING OUT!

THE mysteries involved in many of God's providential dealings with the children of men, will be the principal subject for our consideration this afternoon and evening. Were I under the necessity of resorting to the writings of any *uninspired* man for the selection of an *appropriate text* bearing upon the theme before us, I should be inclined to quote the words of William Cowper, as contained in your hymn-books:

“God moves in a mysterious way
His wonders to perform.”

Kindred to this is the language of the great apostle to the Gentiles, who spake as he was directed by the Holy Ghost: “How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!”

The term here translated “judgments” evidently signifies God's *arrangements*, his plans, or proceedings. And by their *unsearchableness* may be meant, that his doings in the natural and moral world, in providence and in grace, cannot be so

investigated as to be fully understood. As David, the sweet singer of Israel, expresses it : “ His judgments are a great deep.” And as a modern poet repeats the idea : —

“ Deep, in unfathomable mines
Of never failing skill,
He treasures up his bright designs,
And works his sovereign will.”

In the last clause of our text we read that “ His ways are past finding out.” The idea rendered by the term *ways* denotes the Divine mode or manner of accomplishing things ; the ordering and developments of providence ; God’s plans and enterprises, throughout his dominions. As the Psalmist has it : “ Thy way is in the sea ; thy path is in the great waters ; and thy footsteps are not known.”

The phrase “ past finding out ” literally implies, cannot be *tracked* or traced out. This is a figure of striking beauty. As if the pathway and footprints of Jehovah were in the deep and wide sea, while the waves close immediately thereover, leaving no legible tracings that may be followed or sought out. ’Tis known that he has passed — but as his “ goings forth are of old from everlasting,” and as with our bedimmed eyesight and finite capacities we are able to recognize but a small part of his comprehensive purposes, well may we feel constrained to say, as did Paul to the Church at Rome, “ How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out.”

Surely “ none by searching can find out the Almighty to perfection,” whether it regards the wondrous works of his hands, or the glorious attributes of his character. And notwithstanding the almost endless controversies of theologians, ancient and modern, Old School and New School, those who have theorized and reasoned most

“ Of providence, foreknowledge, will and fate,
Fixed fate, free will, predestination, absolute,
Have found no end in wandering mazes lost ;”

have been bewildered and baffled in their philosophical speculations. Let this "vain jangling and strife of words" come to an end; let angry disputes cease; let there be no more "splitting of hairs" on nice metaphysical points; let theological wranglings which have so long caused divisions in the church of our Redeemer, and filled up the ranks of scepticism, be abandoned; let all be ready to sit as loving disciples at the feet of the great Teacher of men, and drink in deeply of his spirit; give full credence to a direct "Thus saith the Lord" however incomprehensible the truth uttered; say in view of all mysteries, "Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight;" remember that "secret things belong to God," and cleave unyieldingly to the prominent and *essential* facts of Revelation; and let no one be ashamed to own his *ignorance* in regard to some points connected with original sin, our responsibility for Adam's transgression, the unsolved mysteries of providence, and the eternal councils of heaven.

Why, I have oftentimes shuddered to think with what presumptuousness and preposterous bravery some will undertake to climb the everlasting hills of God's mysterious perfections, or pry into the undeveloped secrecies of that Infinite One with whom there is "no centre and no circumference." I tremble when hearing men declare with positiveness what is the final condition of infants; or confidently assert that Christ died only for a few elected ones, while all others are unconditionally reprobated to damnation; branding as heretics those who fail to partake of their bigotry and adopt their one-sided notions; virtually unchurching and anathematizing many of the most pious and godly who advocate the practical Christianity of the gospel.

The erring, fallible sons of men in their imagined wisdom, or rather their superlative *folly* and *short-sightedness*, are accustomed to attribute the withdrawal or the withholding of the regenerating influences of God's Spirit to some *one particular cause* which for the time being seems to loom up with wonderful

distinctness before their mental vision. Many a man is apparently astonished that others do not occupy *his* point of observation, look through his telescope, and see things precisely as he does. Sir! thou art as liable to be in the wrong as anybody else. Therefore suspend all harsh criticisms, and "remove the beam from thine own eye."

For instance, to illustrate the point at which I am now aiming, one devout church-member tells me, that the present dearth of religious interest, the spiritual drought now alarmingly prevalent, is owing to the late *Miller* excitement which so distracted and unsettled the minds of men. Another attributes the same thing to the *Mexican War*, which fastened the crime of blood-guiltiness upon the nation; or to the *California gold fever* which fills the hearts of men with covetousness. A third, with equal confidence, informs us that the undue prominence given to the *reforms* of the day "kills out revivals." Br. A. comes to me with melancholy countenance, and says that a love of *sensual pleasures* does all the mischief. Dea. H. thinks the blame is chargeable to a want of *ministerial fidelity*. While yonder beloved sister lays the whole blame at the door of *sectarianism* among the different denominations of Christians. A seventh thinks that a neglect of *family duties* lies at the bottom of the evil. Another individual refers to *political* agitation and *Garrisonism*; or light literature and the circulation of irreligious newspapers. My reformatory brother contends that God cannot consistently bless such *conservative* "people as ours." While some conscientious sticklers for a "form of sound words" and stereotyped expressions, for the exact phraseology of the Assembly's Catechism, the entire creed of John Calvin, and the shibboleths of a particular party, gravely declare, as a neighboring clergymen did to me a week ago, that the only reason of barrenness in the churches of New England is attributable to lax and *loose theological views*, to the melancholy fact that the *children* are not sufficiently *indoctrinated* into the faith of our *Puritan fathers*.

But do not each of these classes greatly err, not knowing the Scriptures, nor understanding the mind of the Lord? Are we not too ready to ascribe the absence of prosperity to anything rather than the state of our own hearts? And do we not forget that a *thousand* circumstances may *conspire together* to grieve away the Holy Spirit, and to put far off our heavenly Father's "day of power," his "set time to favor Zion," when "the people shall be made willing" and sinners flock to the standard of his Son "as clouds and as doves to their windows?" *Why* move the chariot wheels of salvation so slowly onward? and why does the bright Millennial morning seem to tarry? A part of the reason may be with *you*, and a portion with *me*, and a part in the sovereign arrangements of *Jehovah*. With him is the "residue of the Spirit," and in his own good time he will render human instrumentalities more efficient, cause "a nation to be born in a day," and convert the whole world to himself!

Oh, let not us, who are "of yesterday" and know comparatively nothing, ever presume to be "*wise above what is written*," or lean to our own conceited fancies in accounting for the *mysteries of providence and grace*. Enough for us to know respecting the *Divine* agency and jurisdiction, that "the Lord Jehovah reigns," that "his arm is not shortened that it cannot save," but that "he will do all his pleasure." Enough to know respecting *human* agency and human sinfulness, that our manifold wickednesses have interposed between us and God, hiding his face from us, and that we must repent and humble ourselves before him would we secure his favor.

"Let him who is without sin among you cast the first stone" at his neighbor! Verily, to all of us belongeth shame and confusion of face. Therefore, let the elders of the church and the private membership, let priest and people, unitedly and mutually lie low at the footstool of Sovereign mercy, kiss the sceptre extended to us, be the obedient servants of heaven-ordained and plainly-revealed laws, no longer pushing our inquiries into the private matters of the King of kings, lest he

rebuke our temerity by some stroke of his wrath. *The ways of the Lord are past finding out and his judgments unsearchable.*

Not unfrequently do we hear Christian men and women asserting with positive assurance the peculiar *reasons* for this or that *private affliction*, this or that *public calamity*. But, my friends, is it for you or me to say, that God has his eye fixed *exclusively* upon the sin of war, or oppression, or sabbath-breaking, or drunkenness, or infidelity, or profanity, or slander, or unbelief, when he visits us with individual and national judgments? Take heed that ye do not encroach upon another's territory, and trespass on forbidden ground! There *may* have been *other* reasons, as yet unthought of by ignorant man, in the mind of omniscient Deity when he originally devised those wondrous plans now in operation, when he decreed the condition of men and angels and all created things ages before the world begun, when he "foreordained," consistently with the permission of human freedom, "whatsoever cometh to pass." Beware, fellow mortal, lest with compass and rules of your own manufacture, you strive to measure the Infinite, limit the Illimitable, and circumscribe the Almighty. His secret intentions and motives, which you cannot read with your beclouded eyes, will ever guide him in his own mysterious conduct; while those revealed laws, published by his authority, should be your guide and chart through all the labyrinths of life. Therefore, "submit to him, your sovereign Lord, and learn his will divine." Forsake thine easily besetting and daring sins, and improve under the disciplinary chastisements of Heaven; so shall "all things," however mysteriously ordered, "work together for thy good."

That *there is a God*, presiding o'er the destinies of men, all *nature* speaks, as well as the book of *Revelation*. Yet there is no way of tracking his goings with definiteness, or accounting for all his providences. We can perceive tangible proofs that *he is everywhere*, but his designs are incomprehensible. We may

have some knowledge of the mysterious movements above, around, beneath, and within us ; but cannot see the invisible Hand of that Mighty One, performing wonders on the ocean and the dry land, touching the delicate chords of human thought and feeling, guiding the revolutions of planets and the course of the minutest insect, overruling the changes of an empire and the petty broils of a country village ; who “ sits alone ” on the throne of universal dominion, “ nor borrows leave to be ! ”

When a fearful pestilence stalks through the world, carrying desolation and death in its course ; when plagues and sicknesses are multiplied ;—the inquiry naturally arises, as it did with the Jewish nation in the days of Moses, “ *Wherefore* hath the Lord done thus unto the land ? What *meaneth* the heat of his great anger ? ” But no definite answer, no conclusive response, comes back in reply to such questionings. *His judgments are mysterious*. Yet as certainly as God exists, maintaining a complete and perfect government over the worlds of his make, the widely extended universes under his control, each and every event that transpires has some particular *use* or *uses*. “ It takes place not only *by* causes, but *for* causes and moral ends which God in his wisdom often sees fit to *conceal* ” from the understandings of men.

Many there be who are disposed to ascribe whatever occurs to *nature's laws*, and put Jehovah at a far-off distance, shut him up in some distant corner of creation, or vote him out of existence, and thus place our race in a state of orphanage ! Poor, miserable, *fatherless* children, FOOLS are ye that “ say in your hearts, There is no God ! ” But when a giant disease, like the Asiatic cholera, circumnavigates the globe, traversing around through cities and states, and over lakes and rivers, mowing down our fellows by scores, hundreds and thousands, we are necessitated to think of something away back and beyond nature, something higher and mightier. We are advertised of *God's* tremendousness, that “ in justice he is severely just,

and in goodness awfully good," while man before him is but "as chaff in the summer's threshing floor."

Yes, every great *pestilence*, like the one which has swept from our land more than sixty thousand victims during the past season, and which in the merciful providence of God has just left these western shores, I say, every such pestilence is "an apostle of religion;" showing us living, thinking, breathing, immortal men, some of them, like Wm. B. Tappan, bright lights in the world, "wasting silently away before the breath of an unseen destroyer." It is said of Tappan, however, that he was so emaciated in body before the dreadful disease seized upon his vitals that *there was not much of him to die*.

A strange mysteriousness hangs about this cholera, of which so much has been said and thought. The most diligent and protracted investigations cannot enable one to ascertain its precise birth-place, or discover its hidden causes. With "the nations of earth shuddering before it, and weeping behind," it has journeyed from continent to continent, depopulating the globe. It has hovered in the atmosphere, and infected the very gales of heaven. It has jumped with apparent capriciousness from region to region. In some large towns, with startling suddenness, it has stricken down the aged, the middle-aged, and the young, at the rate of two hundred per day. A mournful stream of coffined corpses has steadily moved onward toward many a grave-yard. Whole families have been smitten at once, and the next you hear of them is that they have been housed away beneath the cold sods of the burying-ground. At one moment, healthful, vigorous men, glorying in their strength and hardihood, make light of all danger; but lo! at the next instant, with scarcely a warning, they are prostrated by pitiable weakness as the pestilence rushes on them, while the terrifying characteristics of the direful scourge display themselves to astonished gazers. Ah! this messenger of God is a *mysterious*, a *marvellous*, and a *fearful* thing, transcending the farthest reachings of our science, mocking our proudest skill, making us to kneel

down and own our impotence and feebleness, yea, our utter helplessness before "the supernal and stupendous powers that hem us in" on every side. We can but acknowledge with an unspeakable depth of conviction that *there is an omnipresent God* by whom the laws of the universe are established and the great frame of nature lives or perishes, who rightfully claims the absolute proprietorship and disposal of all things.

" Great God ! how infinite art thou !
What worthless worms are we !"

Let us uncover our heads, and take our shoes from off our feet, and step softly, for the place whereon we move is made sacred by the presence of Jehovah ! Let us prostrate ourselves before him with the profoundest adoration. Well and wisely has it been ordered that he should occasionally throw wide open the gates of human consternation, and march out with majestic tread upon the agitations and tremblings of our world's population ; not to excite superstitious panic, but forcing men to *pause with awe in the midst of their feverish and hurried career*, constraining them to exclaim, " Marvellous art thou in thy works and ways." " How unsearchable are thy judgments ! and thy ways past finding out !"

My own attention has been called to a contemplation of the mysteries connected with God's providential dealings towards the children of men by hearing of the late sudden, and, as we should say, *premature* decease of a young Baptist minister in our immediate neighborhood. I refer to Rev. Mr. Symonds, for a short time pastor of a church at Amesbury Mills. Most of you have listened to words of truth from his lips as he stood in this pulpit not many Sabbaths since to preach the gospel of our common Saviour. But in the mysterious providence of God he was permitted to deliver but a few messages from the sacred desk ere he was called to lie down and die. After years of hard study at Brown University and Newton Seminary in order to be fitted for the arduous labors of the ministry of reconciliation, and

after entering upon those duties with bright hopes and flattering prospects, he disappears from our view like a dream of the night or the mists of the morning, even before we have an opportunity to say, *farewell*. The report comes to us like an unexpected thunder-clap in a cloudless sky.

“Yet, is it not a noble thing to die
 As dies the Christian with his armor on !
 What is the hero's clarion, tho' its blast
 Ring with the mastery of a world, to this ?
 What are the searching victories of mind ?
 The lore of vanished ages ? What are all
 The trumpeting of proud humanity
 To the short history of one who dies
 As dies the Christian man.”

A letter, which I have just received from James C. Seagrave, a former classmate of brother Symonds in college, says of him, “He was a gentleman in the highest sense. Those who knew him best loved him most. He was somewhat reserved, devoting a large share of his time to study, but it was always thought by his fellow-students that he studied from the worthiest motives. Though often taciturn, he was never sour; but one would think from associating with him that *he loved everybody*, and would forgive an injury far sooner than cherish ill-will. He appeared deeply interested in enterprises of benevolence, and it was chiefly through his active exertions that our class were foremost in their contributions to the missionary cause. All my reminiscences of him are pleasant and agreeable. As a scholar he held a high rank, being the best linguist in the class. As a writer he was distinguished for chasteness of style and beauty of thought; without being a great genius, he was what is better, a diligent, earnest scholar, and an exemplary Christian. I am confident that no one of our class could be more lamented, or remembered with warmer affection.” Thus far the extract.

An entire church, from whom this beloved brother had re-

ceived a unanimous call to be their pastor, may well be dissolved in tears — tears of genuine sorrow and afflictive bereavement, not so much for him as “for themselves and their children.” Indeed our community generally truly mourn his early departure. But his efforts among us are ended, and he who bid fair to be one of the most successful ministers of the New Testament that ever occupied a watch-tower of Zion, “rests from his labors while his works do follow him.” Yet *he is not dead*; he *still liveth* in a train of influences by him instrumentally set in motion, and which will never die out so long as “life, and thought, and being lasts, or immortality endures.” Methinks his pure spirit, after winging its flight to heaven, and catching a glimpse of the glories of the redeemed and the Redeemer, is commissioned to revisit earth, clothed in the garb of an angel, to assist in the sanctification of believers, to minister unto those who are chosen to be heirs of salvation. But we shall gaze upon that benevolent countenance of his nevermore, nor see him walk these streets as aforetime! The slender cord which bound him here is severed in twain by death’s fatal scythe. Never again will the mild and gentle tones of his loving voice be heard in Salisbury or Amesbury, beseeching sinners, comforting saints. We are conscious that there is a *vacuum* among us.

Why this faithful watchman on Jerusalem’s sacred walls, who had just commenced blowing the golden trumpet of the gospel so loudly and so clearly, causing its sweetly thrilling sounds to reverberate in such delightful intonations among these hills and valleys; I say, *why* he should be thus prematurely summoned from earth away, we “know not now, but shall know hereafter.” The disclosures of the last day and the developments of eternity, when God will “justify his way to men,” can alone solve the problem, enlightening us as to the *why* and *wherefore* of a fact now enveloped in doubts and shrouded in mystery.

“Blind unbelief is sure to err,
And scan his work in vain ;

God is his own interpreter,
And he will make it plain."

During the past week, after I had commenced preparing this day's discourses, the newspapers came to hand with the following obituary notice, which furnishes another and a striking illustration of the truthfulness of the declaration contained in our text: "Died in Hallowell, Me., Oct. 29, Rev. Nathan B. Rogers, aged 28, after a short illness of typhoid fever." No item of recent intelligence has affected my mind so deeply. For it refers to an individual with whom I have formerly "taken sweet counsel and walked to the house of God in company." He graduated from the Theological Institution at Andover last year, and was universally acknowledged to be one of the first of his class as to natural ability, massiveness of intellect, ripe scholarship, and deep-toned piety. Furthermore, he had a reformatory spirit, decidedly in advance of the ultra conservatism of some of his associates, and in him the anti-slavery cause found a warm and consistent advocate.

Not many months ago he was settled over one of the largest Congregational churches in Maine, and succeeded in winning the esteem of all with whom he came in contact of every denomination. He preached his last sermons a fortnight prior to his death in his native town, Hopkinton, N. H., and if they were as powerful as his sermons were wont to be, that people can never forget them. He had been married less than three weeks, and was seized with the fatal disease on the night of his return from the bridal journey. The Lord sustain that afflicted sister, newly dressed in habiliments of widowhood, and provide for that destitute flock who are now left as "sheep without a shepherd."

Among the evidences of the heartfelt sorrow of his bereaved people, and their appreciation of his real worth, the church have adopted the following among other resolutions: "Whereas, God in his adorable sovereignty has removed by death our beloved pastor, therefore, *Resolved*, That while we bow in cordial sub-

mission to this mysterious dispensation of our heavenly Father, we are greatly oppressed with grief at the death of one who was rich in the endowments of mental powers and intellectual cultivation; in the ornaments of Christian purity, simplicity and gentleness; in the graces of a vigorous and earnest piety: a steadfast and increasing devotion to his Master's service; cut off in the first year of his ministerial labor, in the strength of manhood, in the progress of fruitful effort, in the fullness of hope and promise, and in the strong and growing attachment of his people."

It is a remarkable fact that within a few months of each other, *three* of the most talented of the same theological class have died. Whoever among their acquaintances thinks of *Colt*, *Kennedy* and *Rogers*, will remember with no ordinary emotions of love a *noble trio* who graduated with honor from yonder "school of the prophets" in 1848, but who have since passed up into a higher sphere, a more exalted class from which they will never graduate! In a book from the library of one of them, I find a leaf turned down at the following significant and affecting passage. It is so appropriate to our present theme that I cannot forbear quoting it.

"The providence of God in the death of his saints is often as dark and inexplicable as his dealings with them during life. Behold that young man who has early consecrated himself to God; his heart under the constraining love of Christ is set on entering the holy ministry. He commences an education to qualify himself for extensive usefulness. He enters with enthusiasm on his studies, pursuing them with unwearied activity and perseverance. With toil and pain and privation known only to himself, he at length completes his collegiate and theological course. What an object of interest is he now to his friends, to earth and heaven! With the "dew of his youth" fresh upon him, and in the morning vigor of his manhood — with ardent hopes and lofty aspirations — with talents of the first order — a mind enriched with the best stores of knowledge, human and divine — a man of God thoroughly furnished unto every good word and work — panting to enter on the high and noble duties of the sacred office. What

an object of interest and of promise — what a comfort to the pious father and mother, who have reared him amidst prayers, and tears, and tender anxieties, watching over him with a yearning and consuming solicitude till the present moment. And now he has arrived at the very point when he, his parents, and the church are about to realize the consummation of all their devout wishes respecting him. But alas! in this very moment of purest sunshine, when all creation seems to smile and to hail with ecstasy the commencement of that youthful career which promises so much of glory to God and good to man, death seizes the illustrious victim and confines him a prisoner in its cold and silent halls! His sun goes down at noon, while parents and friends, the church and the world, bereaved and bleeding at heart, feel the disastrous darkness that ensues!! What blasting of hope, what blotting out of promise, what mockery of human nature's noblest schemes and loftiest aspirings are here! And all this under the immediate control of an infinitely benevolent God! "What he doeth we know not now." Such cases of death among the most hopeful and lovely of the saints is not a rare occurrence. And what involves it in more perplexity is to notice the opposite characters living to an old age. The worthless and wicked, whose lives seem a nuisance, the pests and curses of families and neighborhoods, the undefinable class of hangers-on to the skirts of decent society, fools and fops, the indolent and stupid, the drones and dregs of the race, are often allowed to fill up the full measure of man's allotted time on earth. Why these things should at present characterize the providence of God we know not. But will the veil which now conceals the reasons of these dealings of the Almighty never be removed? Will clouds and darkness rest forever on his ways?"

John Summerfield, the prince of *Methodist* clergymen, and one of the most extraordinary preachers the world has ever known, *died at a very early age*. Were he to arise from the dead and resume his earthly labors, I, for one, would go farther to listen to his words of burning eloquence, than to hear any

man that has lived since the days of the Apostles ; not excepting Massillon, Christmas Evans, Jonathan Edwards, Dr. Griffin, Pres. Davies, or George Whitefield. Some of the last named could more easily startle and stimulate to wildness the members of their congregations, but there was a refinement and chasteness about Summerfield's productions which commands an involuntary love mingled with reverence. His sanctified imagination was enkindled by a holy fire, kindred to that with which the angel touched the lips of the prophet of old. Astonished hearers would be "rapt toward the third heaven" by his unparalleled delivery of God's everlasting truth, almost seeming to hear "things which it is not proper for a man to utter," and retire from his meetings wondering and weeping.

What a loss did the church universal sustain when he was taken home to glory ! A greater loss than it would be to spare a dozen of our ordinary sermonizers who from sabbath to sabbath read their prosy essays to a sleepy audience, in a dry, dull, lifeless, unfeeling manner ! Hence we can but see an undeniable confirmation of the mysteriousness of God's providences. Alas ! my brother, that thou should'st die so soon ! One of the brightest lights that ever greeted mortal eye-sight has been extinguished, or rather disappeared from earth to sparkle forever with dazzling radiance in the crown of our Saviour's rejoicing. A few brilliant coruscations of his genius, a few flashes of his unsurpassed oratory are left on record, so *instinct with life*, so pregnant with celestial fire, as well-nigh to set the manuscripts which contain them all in a blaze ! And yet, as the English poet Montgomery, who had heard him in his native country, remarks, "Every attempt to present on paper the splendid effects of his impassioned eloquence, is like gathering up dew-drops, which appear jewels and pearls on the grass, but run to water in the hand ; the essence and the elements remain, but the grace, the sparkle, and the form are gone."

The first sermon that he preached in the city of N. York, after crossing the Atlantic, from the text, "Seek ye first the kingdom

of God and his righteousness," is represented as having an electrical effect, demonstrating his ability of swaying the hearts of the people at his will. While preaching from these words: "If a man believe my saying he shall not see death," he introduced a part of the poetical address of the dying Christian, commencing at:

"What is this absorbs me quite?"

and when he came to the line,

"Lend, lend your wings, I mount, I fly,"

hundreds of his auditory are said to have arisen, involuntarily, as it were, from their seats; and the close of the quotation found them standing with their eyes riveted upon that youthful being who seemed to have nought of earthliness about him save the fetters he was so soon to drop. The more he was caressed and flattered, the more he was praised and applauded, the more humbly and closely did he cleave to the cross of Christ whence he gathered his preternatural inspiration.

No wonder that crowds thronging to hear him were so dense that he was sometimes obliged to get to the pulpit through the windows; and that the vast multitudes in and around the building would remain intensely interested, while for the space of three hours he would pour out from the depths of a spirit *all alive with thought and feeling*, one continued stream of eloquence! Like Paul on Mars Hill, Luther in Germany, and Chalmers in Scotland, he *threw his whole soul* in whatever he did and said. This was the grand secret of his powerfulness and his success. The people realized when they came in contact with him that they were encountering "a *reality*, a man about whom there was neither *cant* nor *sham*." When he spake there was a deep-settled consciousness in the minds of all present, that "the flood-gates of a mighty spirit were opened," and

with a silent awe, relieved at times by sobs and groans, they gazed spell-bound at the impetuous torrent which was sent forth from its glowing source. This fervid, red-hot *earnestness* either imparted its own fire to those around, or swept away all obstacles in the irresistible tide of its vehemence. To use the illustration of another, "There was something in his impassioned delivery that reminded one of the whizzing of steel upon a rapidly revolving grind-stone with the sparks flying off in showers." And to borrow still another illustration, he moved with the speed of "a chariot rushing down hill with such velocity that the axle-tree at length catches fire and consumes the vehicle." In the inscrutable providence of God he was early summoned to exchange the watch-towers of Zion on earth for the hill-tops of paradise in heaven; to lay aside the trumpet of the Gospel for the shining harps of cherubim and seraphim. The world's loss is his immortal gain. Therefore, 'tis for *ourselves* and not for *him* we mourn.

" O ne'er can those who knew, forget,
 Bright herald of the Cross!
 Thy eloquence, thy ardent zeal,
 Thy usefulness, our loss!
 No, the deep homage such as hearts
 To worth alone can yield,
 Is thine, and ever must be thine,
 Lamented Summerfield!
 While that bright crown which decks thy brow,
 Boasts far more precious gems
 Than those which gorgeously adorn
 Earth's glittering diadems!"

Verily "death loves a shining mark," and oftentimes snatches away those, whom, to all human appearances, the church and the world are the least able to spare. "Has God in very deed forgotten to be gracious? Has his mercy clean gone forever? Help, Lord, for the godly man ceaseth, for the faithful fail from

among the children of men. How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out ! How deep his counsels, how divine ! None can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou ? ”

If he travels with the deadly plague among earth’s affrighted inhabitants ; if he opens the yawning gulf, or causes the volcano to belch forth the melted lava that whole cities may be devoured alive ; if he let loose the lightnings and thunderbolts of heaven to blast and wither and destroy ; if “ from the bosom of the destructive tornado he commands the pale nations to tremble ; ” if he stalk abroad with famine, causing multitudes to perish of starvation ; — it is to *silence mankind* into submission, and make them own his sovereignty ; it is to show that he is “ a great God, and a great King above all gods. ” If he permits the Messiah to be crucified and slain, if he suffer the unbelieving Jews with wicked hands to murder his only begotten Son, it is that the world’s redemption may thereby be secured. And if he strikes down the most useful and devoted followers of Jesus, those who seemed to be the “ salt of the earth ” preserving the great mass from moral putrefaction, it is that he may in some way educe good from evil, and bring light out of darkness.

Thus does the very mystery of God’s providences fling a mighty influence all round creation among the various orders of intelligent existences ! Let these three great truths be settled in your minds to-day, and become “ fixed facts ” in your future creed ; *first*, that Jehovah is RIGHT, and all should serve him ; *secondly*, that he is MYSTERIOUS in his nature and doings, and all should stand in *awe* of him ; *thirdly*, that he is infinitely GOOD, and all should *love* him.

“ Judge not the Lord by feeble sense,
But trust him for his grace ;
Behind a frowning providence
He hides a smiling face. ”

The melancholy and mysterious dispensations of Divine providence to which I have already referred, and those to which I may refer hereafter, speak to each and every one of us a momentous, a piercing word! 'Tis ringing in our ears to-day in notes both solemn and gladsome. It tells us with unmistakable distinctness that earth is not our home, and that we have "no lease of life." Hearest thou that startling voice, that word of solemn admonition? Listen to it, O man! with diligent attention, as it occasionally *whispers*, and anon *thunders* in the hearing of thy soul! It tends to dissipate the blinding vapors which enshroud thy stay below in this "dark vale of tears," proclaiming an overruling God, and the durableness of that house on high which hath "many mansions," a "house not built with hands," nor constructed of perishable materials, but "eternal in the heavens." Therefore "when God's judgments are abroad in the earth, let the people not only *tremble*, but learn *righteousness*," and seek an immediate preparation for that better home where no one shall ever say, "I am sick;" where "disease and death are felt and feared no more," where sorrow and crying shall vanish away forever. Here — *here* "all is vanity and vexation of spirit," here we are doomed to "wade thro' tribulations deep," encountering perplexities and mysteries at almost every step; but *there*, up *yonder*, angelic and ransomed ones do "walk in white," with nothing to embarrass or disturb in the presence of our God and Saviour. O! for an "earthquake call," O! for a voice like that of the resurrection trump, sounding as if from out the unfathomed depths of eternity, in the hearing of those who "walk in this world's vain show," bidding them to grasp no longer at fleeting shadows, no longer to "feed on wind and follow after the East wind," no longer to anchor their hopes in earth's polluted soil; but, awaking to the claims of a higher, spiritual life, hasten in getting ready for the imperishable blessedness of the redeemed in heaven, desiring no better portion than to lie forever at God's feet, drink in his smiles, bathe in the ocean of his love, and be filled with his glory!

I have spoken of the *uses* of mysterious providences. With one hand they “draw the gloomy foldings of the inevitable curtain over the gay visions of sense,” pointing an unerring finger to the deathless realms beyond, “a glimpse of whose brightness suddenly rifts the darkness and lights up the dreary landscape of graves;” while with the other hand they direct our attention to the *guiding providence of God*, “whose judgments are unsearchable and whose ways past finding out.” When the Pestilence more than thirty centuries ago breathed upon Sennacherib’s army, covering the ground of their encampment with dead men, the Hebrews saw therein God’s destroying angel dipping his sword in blood, and they *trembled* while they “gave thanks.” Just as easily could the Almighty have “shrivelled the universe to ashes with the breath of his nostrils; or with his outstretched arm levelled a blow that would have crumbled the stars from the crushed firmament like powder.” The age of miracles has indeed gone by, but the same mysterious Being wields the sceptre of unlimited sway. “How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!” *To us he speaks in every providence.*

And blessed be his excellent name! those darksome shadows which seem now to rest on a part of his dealings toward his dependant creature man will flee away in the unclouded light of a dispensation yet to come; perplexities will no longer invest the character of a great and good God even to our finite comprehension, but in a future state his past transactions with mankind will be satisfactorily seen through, and appear perfectly reconcilable with the infinite benevolence of his nature. “Now we see through a glass darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known.” Thanks be to God that his government extends beyond the bounds of our present brief lifetime, and that “the triumphing of the wicked shall be short,” while the sorrows of the righteous will be exchanged for joy unutterable. An equitable administration of

justice will yet be meted out to every being of God's make. In the language of Thompson,

“ The great eternal scheme
Involving all, and in a perfect whole
Uniting, as the prospect wider spreads,
To reason's eye will yet clear up apace.”

Eternity's light will enable us fully to unravel things which now appear unexplainable and unaccountable. When the Judge of quick and dead shall have sat upon his great white throne, with an assembled universe before him, the justness of the principles on which he has ever acted will be seen and acknowledged by all. As saith the poet :

“ Then shall we see the cause
Why unassuming worth in secret lived,
And died neglected ; why the good man's share
In life was gall and bitterness of soul ;
Why the lone widow and her orphans pined
In starving solitude, while Luxury,
In palaces, lay straining its low thought
To form unreal wants ; why heaven-born Truth,
And Moderation fair, wore the red marks
Of Superstition's scourge ; why licensed Pain,
That cruel spoiler, that imbosomed foe,
Embittered all our bliss. — Ye good distrest !
Ye noble few ! who here unbending stand
Beneath life's pressure, yet bear up awhile,
And what your narrowed view, which only saw
A little part, deemed evil, is no more ;
The storms of Wintry time will quickly pass,
And one unbounded Spring encircle all.”

S E R M O N I I .

ROMANS XI. 33.

HOW UNSEARCHABLE ARE HIS JUDGMENTS, AND HIS WAYS PAST
FINDING OUT!

IT is not so much my design in these discourses to elucidate and develop the great idea embodied in our text by *abstract reasonings*, as to introduce *examples* from every day life which go to illustrate it. Neither do I aim at being very systematic and methodical in the presentation of thoughts on the subject. I would fain hope that you are of those who will love the truth of God, come in whatever shape it may, whether in the finished graces of rhetoric, or the plain and blunt expressions of an earnest heart. Suffer me then to proceed still further in showing that the ways of the Lord are past finding out, and his judgments unsearchable.

It is an old and true saying, that "while man appoints, God can disappoint." He can scatter to the winds our fondest anticipations. Without his concurrence the best concerted plans will ne'er succeed. "Unless he build the house, they labor in vain that build it." What are denominated "vicissitudes of fortune," and accidental occurrences, are all shaped according to his predeterminations. He has prefixed the bounds of every

living thing. "Not a sparrow falleth to the ground without his notice; yea, he numbereth the very hairs of our head." Adversity does not come by chance, nor afflictions spring forth from the ground. He wounds and heals at his pleasure; he putteth down one and setteth up another. O, "how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!"

Behold the members of yon joyous household, who have come in possession of almost every thing that can render life desirable. The parents are blessed with those nameless delights which affectionate children and wealth honorably acquired can secure. But ere long their riches "take to themselves wings and flee away." Soon the father dies, and the family are clothed in weeds of mourning. One after another the children follow in thick succession, till finally an only son, the last surviving child, is borne, a corpse, from that lonely home to his narrow burial place, while the frantic and heart-broken mother, like Rachel of old, "refuses to be comforted."

One of the most mysterious of all providences is that which takes away the beloved children of pious parents when unprepared for death. I appeal to Christians to know, if to see their own offspring leave the world without giving evidence of a change of heart would not be the most inconsolable of all sorrows, "about the only sorrow," as one orthodox divine has it, "this side the world of woe to soothe which God's word makes no direct provision." May none of you ever know, by your own felt experiences, of such exceeding anguish.

How many homes have their mysteries of maddening agonies, unnoticed by the casual observer. Verily, "the heart knoweth its own bitterness." See that pious female, whose delicate nature, all sensitiveness and affectionateness, yearns unceasingly for sympathy, brutally treated by a drunken father or besotted husband, her peace of mind for earth wrecked beyond the hope of redemption. The wrongs and griefs of many wives who have depended for happiness on domestic kindnesses, but who have endured more than inquisitorial tortures from those who should

love, cherish and protect, will go to constitute an astounding chapter of disclosures at the tribunal bar of Omniscience. Then, when the secrets of all hearts are revealed and the blackest deeds brought to light, the histories of not a few, who have been permitted on earth to ride rough-shod and steel-corked over bleeding humanity, will read like the annals of hell, or the biography of devils!

Now, I ask, why an omnipotent, an all-wise, and a benevolent God allows his weakest, least offending ones to suffer on through life unrelieved and unredressed? *Why?* O WHY? And echo answers *why!* To me all appears mysterious. "How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out."

I have seen the miserable wife and children of the inebriate well-nigh famishing from day to day for want of the necessaries of life, till finally sent to the alms house for support, while the "iron would enter their souls" in view of disgrace brought upon them; and yet the merciless rumseller, unrebuked, save by the utterance here and there of a feeble remonstrance, and unpunished, except by the stings of a guilty conscience, carries on that nefarious traffic which is nothing less than a murderous system of destroying by piece-meal his fellow-men, and finally he dies in affluence. I have known the poor, down-trodden slave to toil for a season amid want and pain, and then die under the infliction of the lash wielded by a cruel oppressor; and I have known that cruel oppressor, that hard-hearted and tyrannical task-master, to wax fat upon the proceeds of ill-gotten, unrighteous gains, revelling till the last among luxuries unbounded. I have heard of the fires of martyrdom being kindled to consume the bodies of holy and venerable men, those "of whom the world was not worthy," while their inhuman and bloody persecutors lived at their ease, and died as they lived.

Who, in view of such facts and a thousand similar ones that might be cited, can avoid exclaiming, "Wherefore do the wicked live, become old, yea are mighty in power, and spread abroad their branches like a green bay tree? Is there no punishment for

the workers of iniquity? Is there no recompense for the righteous? Is there no God that judgeth in the earth?" Were there not a world of retribution beyond the bounds of time where the inconsistencies of this life are all to be rectified, we should be obliged to admit either that there is no moral Governor in the universe, or else that justice and judgment are *not* the habitation of his throne! *Faith* would be *staggered* in endeavoring to *account* for the evils which *God permits* in this distracted world!

Not many years since, Luther Harris, son of a distinguished clergyman, and Principal of an Academy in my native place, the town of Marlboro', N. H., shocked the entire community by *hanging himself* under the roof of a barn. He had appeared to love every body, and of course every body loved him; and no suspicions were excited in the breast of any one that he premeditated such a death. He possessed an amiable disposition, was "apt to teach," and remarkably successful in his chosen employment. All things conspired, apparently, to render life a precious boon to him. Why then did he rush unbidden into the untried and awful realities of eternity? We know not. On the evening preceding his death he wrote a long letter to his numerous friends. In it he exhorted them to erect no gravestone to his memory. His funeral sermon he wished might be preached from the text, "Oh Absalom!" He prepared for publication in the papers an obituary notice of his own decease, yet without suggesting or intimating the reasons for his rash act. The minds of his acquaintances were for sometime rife with conjecturings, but to this day the whole affair is enveloped in impenetrable darkness. For some unknown cause the Lord permitted that young man, while bright prospects were clustering thickly before him, to break up a flourishing school near the middle of the term, and to leave a stain upon his previously untarnished reputation, blighting the high-wrought expectation of friends, and "bringing down the gray hairs of parents in sorrow to the grave."

Shall I relate a few incidents connected with the life and death of *Joseph Bennett*, for many years pastor of one of our Massachusetts churches? He was a scholar and a gentleman, (though somewhat eccentric,) an interesting writer, and an excellent preacher. It pleased God to bless his labors to a remarkable degree in revivals of religion, and it was his happiness to receive many hundreds into the church who ascribed their conversion to his faithfulness. But he was subject to fits of despondency and depression, — was “sometimes on the mount, sometimes in the vale,” — and was harassed with horrid temptations. His brain became disordered, and in a moment of delirium he committed *suicide*. How mysterious! Had he lived he might have distinguished himself as an author. His published discourses are *full of ideas* that glow in burning words. In him are said to have been blended the boldness of Peter and the affection of John. He not only had that moral courage which led him to denounce the vileness of guilt like him whom men call Boanerges, but “a beauteous vein of tenderness permeated his character, and ran like a silken thread, soft and shining, through his whole life.”

Who can describe the horrors of the dreadful week prior to his decease, as he was moving darkly on to the destiny which like a “spirit of evil” beckoned him forward to destruction! Can we not easily imagine that we hear him crying out during his solitary strugglings with temptation, “My God! my God! why hast thou forsaken me?” A few days before his death he said to a son who had just returned home, “I am glad you have arrived. I wanted to see you once more. An awful attack of melancholy is upon me, and ’tis impossible to shake it off.” How keen the anguish of his sensitive spirit! In the mysterious Providence of God he was permitted to sever the brittle thread of his own life; an impenetrable veil hangs thereover which will not be uplifted, and a mystery which will not be interpreted until the judgment of the great day.

Several years ago a youthful Theologian was set apart by man

as one ordained of God to the work of the Gospel ministry. Convincing evidence did he furnish that his License was not only from his fellow men, but from the high court of Heaven. Most of his short lifetime had been spent with industrious assiduity in the pursuit of human and sacred learning, and he bid fair to shine as a star of peculiar brightness in the intellectual and religious world. I am now speaking of *Bradford Homer*, a deeply interesting memoir of whom has been prepared for the reading public by Prof. Park of Andover. I would advise you to obtain and peruse the same, if you have not already done so. Homer was summoned to preach before a large congregation, the members of which, it is said, hung breathless upon the words of truth and love that flowed from his eloquent lips, as if he had been uttering the accents of angels. The illiterate and the educated, the high and the low, the saint and the sinner, owned his complete mastery over them. To use the inelegant and homely illustration of another, he would seem to succeed in winding the hearts of an entire audience around his arm, and then sway them back and forth at his pleasure.

There was a peculiar unction, a holy enthusiasm in most of his preaching that gave to it an inexpressible charm, and riveted the attention of every listener; a freshness and a life like unto "the first rich gushings of juice from the unpressed grapes;" a *nameless something* that betrayed a heart burning with celestial fire, electrifying and subduing all who came within the circle of its influence. And as his hearers perceived that he was borne down with emotion, they could but think of that ancient and divine *afflatus* when patriarchs, prophets and apostles "spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."

Thus we see the chief element of his power. It was not so much a disposition naturally amiable, a mind well disciplined, and an intellect finely cultivated, as a heart filled with the love of God and compassion for dying men, a heart kindled with burning coals from Heaven's own altar. Looking at Bible truths with the clarified vision of one who had cast himself on the

bosom of Deity, and who lived for eternity, having an ardent yearning of sympathy for the great brotherhood of humanity, and blessed with an imagination which clothed everything sacred with more than earthly beauty, he became inspired, as it were, with the mighty themes he delighted to handle, and was richly qualified to arouse the consciences and benefit the souls of others, to save the perishing and build up the church of our Redeemer.

But scarcely had he put on his polished armor and buckled it closely about him, before he must lay it by forever. Ere four brief months had elapsed from the time of his inauguration into the high office of a minister of the New Testament, he had "passed away like some pleasing dream which is too delicious to be real," furnishing another striking commentary upon frail man's fondest hopes, and the mysteries of God's providence. "How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!"

About thirty centuries ago the waters of a brook which empties into the Kedron were reddened by the blood of a Jewish monarch, who was then and there mortally wounded. Never, perhaps, did death come in more affecting circumstances, for in his continued life the very existence of the nation seemed bound up. I refer to *Josiah*, of whom mention is made in the Book of the Chronicles of the kings of Judah. Well might the tearful, weeping prophet Jeremiah be enrobed in garments of mourning, while all the singing men and the singing women bewailed their loss in sadful lamentations, for the hope of the nation of Israel seemed to be well-nigh extinct, and we close up the remaining history with feelings bordering on those of despair.

Coming down to more modern times, we find that the best king which France ever had, Henry the Fourth, the defender of Protestantism against a system of baptized heathenism, whose only victories were those which he won over the hearts of the people by his generosity, patience, and magnanimity, suddenly fell by the dagger of a Jesuit, and that too when on the point of commencing a great enterprize for the peace and reformation

of Europe, near the close of the sixteenth century. Grief for his untimely death was unbounded, and partook somewhat of the character of madness. Tears and sobs and loud wailing were but a small part of the tokens of sorrow ; for the historian informs us that many persons died on learning the catastrophe. Why God did not arrest the hand of that murderous Jesuit, and prevent the assassination, we cannot say ; but there were sufficient reasons in the Divine Mind, and we will not presume to question the wisdom thereof. Merciful and righteous art thou, O Lord, and that my soul knoweth right well.

In 1816 an English princess was married to the husband of her choice, and declared herself to be the happiest woman in all the kingdom. Her chosen places of resort were not the palaces of the great or the habitations of the rich, but the humble cottages of the lowly poor. Yet she was the undisputed heiress to the most enlightened and coveted throne on earth, and would have brought to it the spirit of a pious queen, being of Christian habits, a strict observer of the Sabbath day in the midst of its general desecration, and the peculiar favorite of the religious portion of the people. But eighteen months after her wedding she died. At her loss there was universal grief throughout the nation. It was as if the entire population formed one afflicted family, and each individual had lost a beloved sister, a dear companion, an affectionate friend, and a kind benefactress. The loved Princess Charlotte was no more, and to many who thereafter looked out from their "loop holes of retreat" upon England, everything seemed a blank. Who could fail to be reminded of Him that "bringeth the princes to nothing, and maketh the judges of the earth as vanity."

You have all heard of *Lamartine*. The time has been when he could stand forth the most imposing personage on the other side of the water, the observed of all observers, and the admired of all admirers. Then was beheld, what one writer pronounces the only instance on record in the world's history, of a great nation calling a Poet to guide the helm of its affairs. He con-

tributed more than any other to overturn the throne of Louis Philippe, and deliberately énthroned himself in the affections of the people. During the four eventful days of February, 1848, he was the presiding spirit, the ascendant genius, restraining the violence of the storm, and compelling the multitude, by the soul which breathed through the rich tones of his modulated voice, to do his bidding, turning them back from the crumbling verge of ruin with "the tri-color waving where the red flag had formerly glared."

Yes, the trembling citizens of Paris were constrained to feel that the voice of Lamartine was to them the voice of fate. His control over them during that fearful outbreak, that perilous insurrection, that unparalleled revolution, was marvellous and almost super-natural. Five times during the memorable 25th of February, while the minds of the populace were half-crazed with excitement and maddened with frenzied fury, did he appear and silence the mobs when no other man on earth could have done it. As they were shouting vengeance, and thirsting for blood, he courageously addressed them with words which had more of power than the thundering of cannon, more of magic than the syren strains of the charmer, and which were more effective than any which had been uttered since Jesus on the troubled waters of Galilee said to the foaming, raging billows, "Peace, be still!" and "there was a great calm."

But wonderful as it may seem, in the providence of God, that distinguished individual has lost his popularity and passed into comparative obscurity. The "wheel of fortune" has *turned*, bringing him to the bottom; and among the latest news which have come to us across the Atlantic, is, that partial derangement has seized his brain, and fears are being entertained that he will become a raving maniac. But at any rate, whether this sad intelligence be correct or not, the sublimity of his position is eclipsed; and although occasionally, like the dying notes of a broken harp, some stanzas of poetry and some scraps of history and some fragmentary dissertations emanate from his gifted pen,

he no longer attracts the gaze and admiration of the world. Oh the myteries of divine Providence in superintending the destinies and changing the conditions of men ! How unsearchable are the judgments of the Lord, and his ways past finding out.

Much has been said during the past year of the *downfall of Rome*, and the mystery connected therewith. After the expulsion of Pius IX, which was considered by many as the greatest event of the age, and the most encouraging sign of the times, a foreign power wickedly interposed to re-instate him in his wonted authority ; thereby causing the car of Christian progress and universal freedom to *move backward*.

“ The rights of man are trampled under,
The flag of liberty is down ;
While heaven and earth look on in wonder
To see the freemen bear the frown.”

The voices, deep-toned and sepulchral, of many a murdered brother's blood, are even now coming up from the streets of that ancient and time-honored city, “ pleading, like angels, trumpet-tongued, against the deep damnation of their taking off ! ” The French nation, in its fratricidal war upon Rome, has left on record one of those bloody historical pages which will require ages yet to come for Humanity and Religion to obliterate, or rather, which will never be blotted out till the fires of the last day have melted and consumed the globe ! Yet victory to the aggressors was nothing better than disgrace, and success worse than defeat. The Lord will sooner or later “ take the cunning in their own craftiness,” and “ cause the wrath of man to praise him.” If the Roman Republic is crushed in the bud, and the Pope reigns again, his throne will be established on ruins, corpses, and human gore. Hence he cannot rule *over the hearts* of but a small number. Men “ convinced against their will are of the same opinion still.” In *forced* submission there can be no real *love*, no affectionate loyalty. The papists themselves will yet repudi-

ate the unholy alliances for the restoration of their spiritual Head; will yet see the folly of resorting to "carnal weapons" in defence of his infallible majesty, God's vicegerent on earth; and will be constrained to acknowledge the great superiority of democracy and Protestantism.

I would next call your attention to the mysterious providences of God connected with the immortal KOSSUTH, (a name which our children must be learned to lisp with emotions of love,) and that unfortunate country of which he has been the principal chief and most illustrious defender. The war in which he has been engaged, a war less objectionable, even among the members of Peace Societies, than any other ever waged on the continent of Europe, has resulted disastrously for the liberties of Hungary. The strong have conquered the weak. Might has triumphed over right. That ill-fated nation, which had so long and so valiantly maintained her independence, has been vanquished and crushed and trodden under foot by the iron heel of Russian and Austrian despotism. Did she not deserve a better fate? Why then, if there be a Sovereign Ruler at the head of all things, did he not interpose his omnipotence to succor virtue's cause, and protect the rights of the poor and the needy? My hearers, we cannot "see the end from the beginning," and will therefore conclude that there can be no unrighteousness with God; and though he allow the wicked to prosper for a time, he will eventually bring order out of confusion, and glory out of shame. Philanthropists the world over have been aroused. The strongest-minded and largest-hearted statesmen are letting their voice be heard in condemnation of the wrong. The pulpit and the press are speaking out. While our most gifted poets are writing with unwonted fervor, and laying their choicest offerings on the altar of suffering humanity.

"Knowest thou, O God of justice, the agonizing cry
 From afflicted Hungary's wrongs and blood ascending to the sky!
 What though the nations of the earth in coldness turn away,
 'Vengeance belongeth to the Lord;' he surely will repay.

Then despair not, gallant nation, for thou shalt yet be free ;
 True hearts with thine are beating in deathless sympathy ;
 Though darkness wraps thy future, one great truth to us is known,
 That *evil cannot triumph long while God is on the throne.*"

And well may we unite with another poet in exclaiming :

" Let Russia bear the Christian name no longer ;
 Write Tyrant, Heathen, Monster, on her sky ;
 Her iron throne is strong, but God is stronger,
 And when a few more years have flitted by,
 His arm will rend her lengthened cords asunder,
 And make her power a by-word and a wonder !

What cause had the Autocrat for interference ?
 What wrong to right, what grievance to redress ?
 None : yet he has sent his armed, enslaved adherents
 To help the wicked Austrian to repress
 The feeble rays of liberty that lighted
 The land now ravaged, blood-besmeared, benighted.

This blood will be a witness, swift and fearful,
 Against the Tyrant at the judgment throne ;
 The desolation wrought in homes once cheerful,
 Each bitter pang, hot tear, and dying groan
 His rage has wrung from victims unoffending,
 Will sting his soul with anguish never-ending !

The world has looked on HUNGARY, admiring
 The noble daring of the faithful band
 That struggled on, with hope and zeal untiring,
 To win the freedom of their Father-land ;
 And mournful words, and burning tear-drops started
 In many a land when hope from them departed."

Kossuth, that undaunted champion of oppressed and struggling humanity, who has seemed like unto a " second Washington," and who, it was hoped, would prove to be the deliverer and

saviour of his countrymen, has been driven as an exile into the dominions of Turkey. He is not only a stern republican of the democratic school, but a professed Christian of the Calvinistic faith, and refuses to renounce the religion of the Cross for the superstitiousness of the Mussulman, although requested so to do by those who have afforded him a refuge from his enemies. When the proposal was made in his presence to abjure Christianity for the Mohammedan faith, three generals and about twenty soldiers complied, but *Kossuth*, with his characteristic frankness and nobleness, declared, in brief terms, that for his part, "Welcome, if need be, the axe, or the gibbet, but curses on the tongue that dared to make him so infamous a proposition!"

What American heart has not been touched and thrilled in reading his published documents, especially his appeals to the British Parliament for relief in this the hour of his extremity; in which he speaks of the "infernal cruelty" of those who have murdered his associates and "shed the best blood" of his nation; and in which he refers to his mother, and wife and children wandering homeless and houseless about Hungary, in the vicinity of unprincipled wretches "who delight in torturing feeble women, and with whom the innocence of childhood is no protection against persecutions."

"Yet he, let come what will of woe,
Has blessed the land he strove to save;
No Cossack hordes, no traitor's blow,
Can quench the voice shall haunt his grave:
'I was the chosen trump wherethrough
Our God sent forth awakening breath;
Come death! come chains! the strains he blew;
Sound on — outliving chains and death.'"

Have you seen the recent letter of *Kossuth* to Lord Palmerston, in which there are so many "thoughts that breathe and words that burn?" There is something in all his writings which affects every nerve and fibre of our being, which *stirs like a trum-*

pet the least sensitive men; which makes you feel as though there were a *living soul* infused into the composition itself — yea, into the very ink and paper from which you are reading. Whose heart does not bleed to think that his most sanguine hopes must expire, that Freedom's fires should be quenched in the blood of her own sons, and the last glimmering spark favorable to European advancement be extinguished? For to the strugglings of Kossuth and his compatriots in the fastnesses of Hungary, under God, did the friends of equality and human progress look for the breaking in sunder the antiquated and despotic chains which had for ages fettered the nations, grinding them into the dust of abject and miserable servitude. *Is there in very deed a God that judgeth in the earth?* Is Jehovah still on the throne of the universe? How unsearchable are his providences, how complicated his plans, how mysterious his judgments, and his ways past finding out!

But let us return to our own land for additional illustrations of the unsolved mysteries connected with God's providential dealings toward the children of men. In April, 1841, a city paper informed us that one of its editors, (*Haughton* of the Boston Atlas,) was about to visit a distant land. He had labored night and day during the year preceding for the elevation of his favorite candidate to the Presidency of the Union, and was successful. He for whom he had battled so convulsively came into power, and the toil-worn politician thought he might rest from his public labors for a season. "I have dreamed all my life-time," says he, "of visiting the continent of Europe. This day I start. Yes, I am going to Rome. These eyes will soon gaze upon the Eternal City." But, mark ye, the only ocean on which he was permitted to embark was one from which no voyager ever returns, the shoreless, unbounded ocean of eternity.

Gen. Harrison, whom this editor had almost idolized, and for whose election he tasked his energies to the utmost, was borne to the Chair of State by an overwhelming majority. But hardly had he taken the reins of government, and entered upon the

duties of his high office, hardly had our population perused his Inaugural Address, ere the intelligence was wafted to us, as on the wings of the wind, that he was no more. Heavy was the calamity which the United States then experienced. Deep was the National sorrow, aye, deeper than ever before or since with the exception of the time previous when the death of our beloved George Washington, the Father of his country, was announced, and once since, when John Quincy Adams was laid in the grave. Funeral sermons were preached in nearly all our pulpits, and nearly every man, whatever his sect or creed, gave signs of sadness. Profound was the impression on the great throbbing heart of our nation — intense and universal the grief. While the guidance of the Ship of State descended to one who failed to secure the confidence of any party in politics, or any denomination of religionists. Verily “God’s ways are not as our ways, nor his thoughts as our thoughts.”

Had I time I would dwell in this connection upon the case of *Mary Lyon*, preceptress of Mt. Holyoke Female Seminary; whose recent death seemed likely to reduce that excellent and far-famed institution to a state of *orphanage*. No lady on earth can be what she was, or make good her place. A *gap* is occasioned by her decease which none can fill. How then could a good God take her away in the very midst of her usefulness? Why did he cut short her days when her efforts here were apparently most needed? Ah! my hearers, we can only exclaim, in the words of the apostle, “How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!”

I might refer to that mysterious Providence which shipwrecked a vessel, and drowned a hundred passengers, not many miles from here, in the neighborhood of Cohasset Beach, a few weeks since. But having dwelt somewhat at length on the heart-rending and appalling circumstances connected therewith in a discourse delivered in your hearing on a former occasion, I barely allude to it now as exemplifying the idea embodied in our text. As that doomed vessel was driven by the furious storm, and

dashed to splinters on the fatal rocks, there were despairing groans and frantic cries and wild shrieks among helpless men, women and children, who were soon to perish in the briny deep. And they *did* perish! and that too just as they were about completing a long and wearisome voyage, and had hove in sight of land. The bones of many of them are resting on the floor of old ocean, they sleep among the sea-weeds and the corals, there to remain till a blast from Gabriel's trump shall awaken the slumbering dead. As it was the LORD who sent that hurricane, and wrecked that ship, and summoned into eternity those brethren of ours, "bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh," we will bow to his inscrutable will, and strive to be reconciled to the fearful catastrophe, although at times a remembrance of it fills us with a shuddering thrill of horror. Of a truth, "God's way is in the sea." Trackless as its surface, and fathomless as its depths, so his mysterious path is beyond our finding out. Dense clouds and thick darkness are oftentimes round about him; yet "justice and judgment are the habitation of his throne." Methinks a voice even now issues from the excellent glory, saying unto us and to all, "BE STILL AND KNOW THAT I AM GOD."

The unsearchableness of God's ways may be further learned from the condition of those who from the cradle to the grave are *blind*, or *deaf* and *dumb*. Why does our heavenly Father, with whom is no injustice, send so many into our world unable to see, or speak, or hear? This, I must confess, has been a puzzling question to me. Can any of you solve the problem? During Anniversary week in New York I attended an exhibition of one hundred and fifty blind children, and another exhibition of two hundred and fifty deaf and dumb children. As I contemplated those sons and daughters of affliction, and as I looked around upon an immense concourse of spectators, whose eyes a portion of the time were literally suffused with tears, my own feelings were deeply stirred within me. But while reflecting on their forlorn state, burdened, as I had imagined, with an existence hardly endurable, this thought at length struck my mind with peculiar

force : — Let those dear children and youth be regenerated by the Spirit of God, and they will be filled with peace, hope and joy ; nay more, *heaven will be all the sweeter* to them on account of the disadvantages they have had to contend with on earth ; their *change* from time to eternity will be *greater* than to us, as it will be something *new* for them to *see* and to *hear*.

The darkness in which the blind have been enveloped will be exchanged for the splendors of one eternal day, where they “ need no candle, neither light of the sun, for the Lord God giveth them light.” The mute silence of the deaf and dumb will be superseded by an ability to listen to and join with the ravishing music of that heavenly choir who are forever harping and singing around the throne. *John Milton*, whose sightless eye-balls daylight could not bless, and yet who dictated to his amanuensis thoughts and words almost inspired, seemed to catch glimpses in his latter days of Heaven’s unspeakable glories, notwithstanding his total blindness. A little before his death he wrote as follows :

“ Oh I seem to stand
Trembling, where foot of mortal hath seldom been,
Wrapped in the radiance from the spotless land,
Which eye hath never seen.

Visions come and go,
Shapes of resplendent beauty round me throng ;
From angel lips I seem to hear the flow
Of soft and holy song.

In a purer clime
My being fills with rapture ; waves of thought
Roll in upon my spirit ; strains sublime
Break over me unsought ! ”

Again, who has not occasionally read of *slaves*, long subjected to the unmerciful treatment of cruel taskmasters, making *fruitless attempts* to gain their *liberty*. A few of the noblest spirits

among them, for instance, band together, and determining to assert their God-given and inalienable rights, elope clandestinely from the prison-house of their bondage. Guided by the light of the North Star — the star of freedom and of hope — which seems to smile lovingly and encouragingly upon them, while it reproves the hard-heartedness of their oppressors, they pursue their nightly way towards the province of Canada, a province overshadowed by Queen Victoria's throne, "to touch whose *monarchical soil*," as a sarcastic writer well expresses it, "ensures freedom to every *republican* slave!"

But the trained blood-hound, or the more inhuman overseer, is on the track of those panting fugitives. Oh, my God! preserve them! But alas! as these brothers and sisters of ours, kindred to us by blood of man and by the blood of the Son of God, are flattering themselves that they shall elude the grasp of the kidnapper, and find a safe covert from the hand of the spoiler, they are overtaken, recaptured, scourged and fettered, and doomed to a harder lot than ever. Quenched now in their bosom is the joyous light of hope, and with disconsolate and well-nigh broken hearts they are forced to plod their weary way back to chains and servitude. Every natural instinct of the human soul, every moral principle in the mind of man, revolts at the violence and the usurpation; while we almost involuntarily pray for the Divine vengeance to rest on the guilty heads of those who sanction the damning deed! Or rather, we will beseech the Lord to *have mercy* upon them, and avert the woes threatened against those who "build their houses by unrighteousness and their chambers by wrong," who "use their neighbor's service without wages, and turn aside the needy from his right."

Explain to me if you can, tell me if you are able, why the Divine Administrator of justice and equity, with whom nothing is impossible, does not intercept the progress of those who make merchandise of men and women, who chattelize and rank with horned cattle immortal beings created in the image of the in-

visible God? Why does not Jehovah "make bare his red right arm" to assist those captive children of his in effecting their escape from a state of vassalage, "one hour of which," according to the opinion of Thomas Jefferson, "is fraught with more misery than ages of that which our fathers rose in rebellion to oppose?" Ah! my brethren, there is mystery here! "How unsearchable his judgments, and his ways past finding out!"

I need not stop here to prove to you the inherent sinfulness of slavery. As freemen and as Christians we require no labored argument to convince us that to enslave one of our fellow-men is to bid defiance to the understood laws of our Creator and the natural rights of his creatures. And yet, "tell it not in Gath, publish it not in the streets of Askelon," an accursed system of involuntary servitude is tolerated in this land, which tears the crown of self-government from the brow of the black man, because of the color of his skin; laughs at the very idea of the universal brotherhood of a race made of one blood and destined to a like immortality; revels in the grossest forms of concubinage and adultery; scoffing at the dictates of justice and humanity; and with all deliberateness turning its back upon the high morality and pure religion of Jesus! But deliverance shall yet come to the oppressed African. The poor, maltreated, down-trodden negro shall by and by be acknowledged a *man*, a *brother* and an *equal*. The jubilee of his emancipation shall eventually be sounded through the land.

" Out from their place of bondage 'tis decreed our slaves shall go,
 And signs to us are offered as erst to Pharaoh;
 If we are blind, their exodus, like Israel's of yore,
 Thro' a Red Sea is doomed to be, whose surges are of gore.
 'Tis ours to save our brethren, with peace and love to win
 Their darkened minds from error, ere they harden them to sin;
 But if man before his duty with a listless spirit stands,
 Ere long the great Avenger takes the work from out his hands."

Possibly some of you may be growing weary of these numer-

ous examples of God's mysterious dealings with our race. I have already adduced more than a score of illustrations, but I wish to introduce one more, and with a few thoughts growing out of it will leave you for this evening. I mean the Providence which takes the life of some of our missionaries immediately after they reach the shores of heathenism. I will not specify any particular case. But in the history of missions there have been examples not a few of this sort. Almost every number of the *Missionary Herald* contains a notice of one or more.

A son of many prayers and tears resolves to devote himself to the work of propagating the truths of the Gospel of the blessed God in the dark corners of the earth where Christ is unknown. After obtaining the necessary mental and spiritual furniture, and after a long and dangerous voyage, he steps foot on Pagan soil. But no sooner has he done so than a messenger of death aims at him a well-directed arrow, and he is buried out of sight. Was that according to the mind and will of the great Sovereign Lord of all? Most certainly *it was*. "How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!"

Yet the enterprise of renovating the world through means of Home and Foreign Missions will prove *no failure*. Nature's funeral day will at length arrive, and the stars put on weeds of mourning, or fall from their places like figs from a fig-tree shaken by a mighty wind; the waters of old ocean shall be drained to the bottom, and the deep foundations of this earth be loosed; the mountains will melt like wax before the presence of the Lord, and yonder sun and moon be quenched on the pavements of heaven by the breath of his mouth and the brightness of his coming; while the pillars of the universe shall give way, and the whole material world be laid in ruins! — but God's promises are all "yea and amen in Christ Jesus;" not one jot or one tittle of his word shall ever fail! "Hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good!"

The world's evangelization will ultimately be accomplished, though many a champion fall. Christ shall "see of the travail of

his soul," and all heathendom be given to him for an inheritance. The "blood of martyrs" has been denominated the "seed of the church;" then why may not the same be said of the death of missionaries? And although any herald of the cross who longs to proclaim the "good news and glad tidings of salvation" among the benighted tribes of earth, is liable to fall by the stroke of death even before he reach his destination, the command is as binding now as ever, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. Go teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost."

After all, my brethren, we have less to do with the *mysteries of Divine Providence* than with the *obligations imposed upon us* by our *relations to God* and our fellow-men. And I would dwell a moment or two on this point from the fact that this evening is the time when Monthly Concerts of prayer for the world's conversion are being held throughout Christendom. O come with me, and taking our position upon some elevated mount of vision, let us gaze out upon the funeral procession of millions of human beings on their way to death and hell without a knowledge of the Bible, profoundly ignorant of the way of life and salvation through a crucified Redeemer. Dearly beloved, I pray you to send the living bread to famishing, starving immortals. Would you refresh the hearts of multitudes just ready to perish for lack of the crumbs that fall from your Master's table, then send them the colporteur and the missionary. Send the word of God for free circulation among the destitute of all languages and complexions. Seek to possess a world-wide charity, a comprehensive benevolence, which will lead you to throw your arms of faith and love around the globe. Adopt as your own that noble motto, "MY COUNTRY IS THE WORLD; MY COUNTRYMEN ALL MANKIND."

In some parts of the earth and some states of this Union, the way is so hedged up that we cannot effect anything directly for the needy. But there are other places innumerable which are

now accessible, places where degraded men and women are stretching out their hands and uttering the most piteous cries for help. Providence has thrown wide open the door, and you have the means of affording *some* relief. Such being the case, if we presume to stand aloof from them, and they perish, will not God hold us responsible for their blood? For one, I tremble at the perilous position occupied by the American churches, and this church among the rest, in regard to the claims of the heathen world.

You have probably read in the newspapers of the loss of a certain vessel, containing thirty or forty passengers who may now be freezing to death among the ice-bergs of the north, or perishing with hunger in some other quarter of the globe; and the captain's wife, in her distress, has petitioned the governments of the United States, Great Britain, and Russia to adopt means for the finding and saving of that ship and crew. But I have a sadder story to tell you, and a more urgent appeal to make. Six hundred millions of unconverted souls are on board one vessel, of which satan claims the ownership and he has bound these his captives in chains of iron, while ever and anon he hurls one victim after another into destruction! And now you are summoned by arguments drawn from heaven, earth and hell to hasten to the rescue. In *God's* name **ARISE**, and snatch as brands from the burning, those for whom the Saviour died. Oh! *wake up* to earnest effort and self-denial. Pour of your abundance into the treasuries of the Missionary Association and the American Board, considering the latter as the "elder brother" of the former.

O that Christians might know, even in this their day, the high duty devolved upon them. They have a place to stand near by the eternal throne of God, and a mighty moral lever is placed in their hands wherewith to lift and revolutionize a fallen world!

"The humblest voice may sound alarm,
Ho, then, *for Christ*, arm, soldiers, arm!

Blow up the trump, send warning forth
 To every land Christ's sons have trod ;
 Call up from South, and East, and North,
 The whole church militant of God !
 Peace, doubtful tongue, nor stammer nay,
 Have but the heart — God opes the way.

Think ye the heathen world shall hear
 And send no echo to the sound ?
 Exulting nations shall give ear,
 And Himmalayah's heights resound ;
 Dry bones they are — but God can raise
 The dead in sins to shout his praise !”

Now, we are all mysterious beings, a wonder to ourselves and to angels, endowed with mysterious faculties, surrounded by mysterious objects, and pressing onward to a mysterious destiny. Here we are, on this mysterious planet, called earth, mid-way between the glorious mysteries of paradise, and the awful mysteries of perdition. Man was mysteriously created out of nothing originally, and mysteriously left to apostatize from his primitive sinlessness. Then in the mystery of grace divine he was placed on probation to believe in the promised Seed of the woman and be saved, or disbelieve and be lost ; while a mysterious God is inviting him up heavenward, and a mysterious devil, with infernal seductions, is attempting to drag him down hellward. In the mysterious arrangements of the great Supreme, multitudes in every age have been left without a Revelation, all their life-time subject to bondage through fear of falling into the mysterious jaws of annihilation, knowing little or nothing of a state of being beyond the grave. To cap the climax of mysteries, Jehovah Jesus was manifested in the flesh to make atonement for a polluted and sin-ruined world, giving to as many as believe on his name power to become the sons of God and inheritors of a blissful immortality. Yes, “great is the mystery of godliness.” While a measure of the mysterious influences of the Holy Spirit are given to every man to profit withal. This invisible and mys-

terious Agent is now coöperating with the church for the redemption of the world.

But though we live in a universe of mysteries and an age of wonders, under the moral government of a Being whose decrees and workings are oftentimes incomprehensible and irreconcilable to us, one thing is clear as the sun at noon-day, namely, that our sympathies, prayers, contributions and services are demanded to extend the priceless blessings of the Gospel all over the earth! Let no man excuse himself from lending a helping hand in this sublime enterprise. Son, daughter, the Lord hath need of thee! Fathers and mothers, come up to the duties assigned you. Let old men and children, young men and maidens, here enlist their noblest powers. Ye aged ones, with hair whitened by the snows of threescore winters, you must labor the harder from the fact that working-time is nearly over, and that the young need the benefit of your example. Come one, come all, now while you may, and rally to the standard of the cross, with the banner of our Messiah, the blessed Prince of Peace, floating gloriously over your heads.

Devote, I pray you, the manifold and gracious gifts of God to the world's regeneration, to the hastening on of the bright Millennial morning when at Emmanuel's name "every knee shall bow and every tongue confess." Would you deepen and heighten your own consolations, then send your treasures up before you into heaven, and secure friends there who will receive you into everlasting habitations. With how much appropriateness and significance was this epitaph chiselled upon the tomb-stone of a certain charitable man: "*What I retained, I have lost; what I gave away remains with me.*" You that are parents, consecrate your offspring as living sacrifices on God's altar, and train up some of them to be ministers and missionaries. At any rate, *give* liberally; *GIVE* of your time and your substance, your money and your influence. So shall that God "whose judgments are unsearchable, and whose ways past finding out," command his blessing to rest upon you, even life forevermore.

